United Nations CRPD/C/SR.303

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Distr.: General
4 April 2017

Original: English

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
Seventeenth session

Summary record of the 303rd meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 23 March 2017, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Degener

Contents

Consideration of reports submitted by parties to the Convention under article 35 (*continued*)

Initial report of the Islamic Republic of Iran (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of the present record to the Documents Management Section (DMS-DCM@un.org).

Any corrected records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be reissued for technical reasons after the end of the session.

GE.17-04699 (E) 300317 040417

1704699

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by parties to the Convention under article 35 (*continued*)

Initial report of the Islamic Republic of Iran (continued) (CRPD/C/IRN/1; CRPD/C/IRN/Q/1 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 11-20

2. **Mr. Naziri Asl** (Islamic Republic of Iran), replying to questions asked at the previous meeting, said that the Islamic Republic of Iran had a high rate of accession to international instruments and that the Government had begun the necessary, but time-consuming, consultations with stakeholders regarding possible ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

3. **Ms. Nemati** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, as the first Iranian woman to win a medal at the Paralympic Games, she was proof that women, including those with disabilities, could succeed in sport. However, such success could not be achieved without the support of the Government and other actors, especially athletes' families. Henceforth, her mission was to inspire women and girls with disabilities not to surrender to their disability and to encourage men to stand by them in their pursuit of empowerment. The involvement of women with disabilities in sport was on the agenda for mainstreaming at the community level. A national Paralympic day had been introduced with the aim of increasing the practice of sport by persons with disabilities. Although much remained to be done, efforts would continue until the goal of providing the best possible life for persons with disabilities, especially women and girls, had been realized.

4. **Mr. Jafarzadeh** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Iranian Red Crescent Society was not the sole organization involved in disaster management. It tended to intervene at the onset of a disaster or crisis, while the State Welfare Organization took over in subsequent stages. The national committee established to prevent disability, which was made up of government bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), had a duty to take steps to protect health in the event of natural disasters. Persons with disabilities were taken into account in disaster preparedness initiatives. For example, consideration was given to the needs of students with disabilities during the earthquake drills that were conducted in schools. Two conferences on the provision of rehabilitation services had been held, as well as workshops for teachers and students in relation to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

5. **Mr. Ghafourian** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that providing training in Braille was a top priority of the special education department of the Ministry of Education. Accordingly, considerable training in the use of Braille script was provided to students with visual impairments in both mainstream and special schools. In addition, there were plans to train teachers in mainstream schools and parents of students with visual impairments to read Braille and use Braille script machines. An ad hoc working group had been set up to adopt unified sign language teaching methods, and refresher courses were also available for sign language interpreters working in mainstream schools.

6. **Ms. Hamed** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that over a third of courts and judicial buildings were currently accessible for persons with disabilities and that the plan was to increase access as much as possible over the next 10 years. An electronic complaints system had been put in place so that persons with disabilities could follow the progress of their complaint without having to come to court in person unless instructed to do so by the authorities. In addition, in-home interviews and videoconferencing were to be the preferred method of communication in legal proceedings involving persons with disabilities. Under criminal procedure law, whenever a person involved in proceedings could not speak Farsi or had a visual or hearing impairment, the requisite professional help had to be made available for hearings. Failure to provide such assistance was a violation of the law and the judge hearing the case could be prosecuted.

7. Under the Islamic Penal Code, a person who could not distinguish between right and wrong could not be held accountable for an offence. Offenders should be treated in hospital if their mental disability made them a threat; otherwise, they were incarcerated in prisons. By law, the right to life was universal and no distinction was made between persons with and without disabilities in that regard. Breaches of patient confidentiality by health-care professionals carried a penalty of 3 to 6 months' imprisonment. Civil servants who divulged personal information faced dismissal.

8. **Mr. Nahvinejad** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that there were no mobility issues for wheelchair users in Tehran and that a website had been created through which they could request special transportation. In addition, a system was in place whereby persons with disabilities could send a text message to report buildings and streets that were poorly accessible. Steps were being taken to correct accessibility problems in the Tehran metro and improve safety, particularly for passengers with visual impairments. Strategic committees on disability issues, involving persons with disabilities, had been set up in municipalities across the country, and plans were under way to facilitate accessibility, particularly in high traffic urban areas. Measures were also being taken to make historical sites outside the capital more accessible.

9. In 2015, there had only been around 300 sign language interpreters in the country. However, training had been stepped up since then: 170 interpreters had been trained and the intention was to train a further 150 annually. The training was provided in conjunction with NGOs and had been extended to clerics. According to State Welfare Organization guidelines, there should be a sign language interpreter in every social welfare department. In addition, efforts were being made to train assistants for persons with disabilities.

10. Most individuals who were placed under the guardianship of the State Welfare Organization or an institution had such severe disabilities that they were unable to live independently or their families were unable to care for them. Nothing was imposed on persons with disabilities, whom the State provided with options to live independently; however, those who did not have family or a guardian were by law wards of the State. Plans were under way to set up small houses for assisted independent living. To that end, a memorandum of understanding had been signed with Germany, which was a pioneer in the field. Persons with chronic mental illness were gradually given the opportunity to live independently and reintegrate into society through a halfway house project.

11. Persons with disabilities living in institutions were covered by accident insurance, and protocols were in place in the event of a natural disaster or crisis. Health insurance was universal, regardless of whether or not a person had a disability, and a medical examination was no longer necessary for obtaining an insurance policy. The State Welfare Organization supplemented health insurance for low-income groups, including persons with disabilities.

12. Much progress had been made in the past decade in providing a range of assistive devices to persons with disabilities. Moreover, it was now possible to benefit from foreign technology and scientific advances and to attend industry fairs abroad. Although 80 per cent of devices were manufactured domestically, some, in particular hearing aids, were imported. Over 1,000 cochlear implant surgeries were performed each year. Applications for persons with disabilities were available for download in Farsi and English from the website of the State Welfare Organization, and meetings were held with NGOs annually to discuss what new assistive devices were needed.

13. The State Welfare Organization was responsible for providing services to prevent violence against women with disabilities. It had early detection and intervention mechanisms in place, as well as a social emergency department tasked with identifying cases of exploitation, harassment, neglect and bullying in the workplace or educational facilities. The public could report cases to the department, which also cooperated with the police where necessary. The State Welfare Organization ran shelters for victims with disabilities, most of whom were women and girls, in all the provinces of the country. Psychologists and counsellors were on hand and training was available to help victims reintegrate into society.

14. **Mr. Ghahfarokhi** (Islamic Republic of Iran), providing a statistical overview of the situation with respect to landmines in the country, said that, as a result of the war with Iraq,

the Islamic Republic of Iran had the second worst landmine problem in the world. Nevertheless, marked progress had been made in demining efforts and in reducing mine-related deaths and injuries between 2009 and 2015, without any assistance from the international community. NGOs were involved in awareness-raising efforts.

15. **Mr. Naziri Asl** (Islamic Republic of Iran) stressed that, without international cooperation, including technology transfers, the Government was not in a position to adequately address the landmine issue.

16. **Ms. Hamed** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that a person with a psychosocial disability who committed an offence under the Islamic Penal Code would be punished commensurately with the seriousness of the offence; no offence went unpunished.

17. **The Chair** drew the State party's attention to the Committee's general comment No.1 (2014) on article 12 and its guidelines on article 14.

Articles 21-33

18. **Mr. Tatić** asked how many hours of television broadcasting were interpreted into sign language per day and whether audio description was available for Iranian films. He also wished to know how many people had used the electronic complaints mechanism referred to and what the outcome of the complaints had been. Lastly, he asked what percentage of websites had been made accessible for blind persons and whether the State party had reached out to other countries to learn from their experience with online accessibility.

19. **Mr. Kabue** said that he would like to have further information on the impact and effectiveness of the 3 per cent quota for employment of persons with disabilities in government organizations and publicly funded bodies. Referring to paragraph 161 of the replies to the list of issues (CRPD/C/IRN/Q/1/Add.1), he asked what steps were being taken to amend the provisions on parliamentary elections that effectively excluded the candidacy of persons with certain types of disabilities.

20. **Mr. You** Liang, recalling that the Islamic Republic of Iran had volunteered to be reviewed at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2017, said that he would encourage the State party to include organizations of persons with disabilities in its reporting. Noting that seven of the Sustainable Development Goals were linked to articles of the Convention, he asked how the State party mainstreamed the rights of persons with disabilities into its implementation of the Goals. He also wished to know what measures the State party was taking to ensure that persons with disabilities were able to get out of poverty. Lastly, he asked whether Paralympic athletes were treated in the same way as Olympic athletes in respect of the sports bonus.

21. **Mr. Rukhledev** asked what steps were being taken to ensure that persons with disabilities could exercise their right to participate in elections and public life on an equal basis with others, what the voting rate was among persons with disabilities who lived in rural areas or could not access polling stations, and whether persons with disabilities were represented in the parliament. He also wished to know whether electoral materials were accessible and what practical measures were in place to ensure the accessibility of polling stations. He asked to what extent persons with disabilities and their representative organizations were involved in decision-making at the municipal and regional levels. Lastly, he invited the delegation to comment on the measures taken to develop sport for deaf persons, to ensure access to sports activities and facilities for children with disabilities, and to stimulate the athletic potential of persons with disabilities.

22. **Mr. Ishikawa** said that the State party was to be commended on its development, in partnership with civil society organizations, of a high quality text-to-speech engine that supported Farsi. He asked how the State Welfare Organization and the Foundation of Martyr and Veterans' Affairs took into account the views of persons with disabilities, especially women and children and those with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, when assessing the implementation of the Convention.

23. **Mr. Ruskus** said that the State party should review its use of language to avoid patronizing terms such as "special students", which promoted segregation and were not in

line with the Convention. He would like to know how many children with disabilities were in mainstream education, what impairments those children had and whether any of them had intellectual disabilities. Information on the gender ratio among those children and the support provided to them in mainstream schools would also be welcome. Lastly, he invited the delegation to explain how inclusive education was regulated by national legislation and to describe any plans to strengthen inclusive education in accordance with the Committee's general comment No. 4 (2016).

24. **Mr. Martin**, welcoming the State party's efforts to improve living arrangements for persons with disabilities in collaboration with Germany, said that he would like to know whether persons with disabilities would be able to choose where and with whom they wished to live. In addition, he would appreciate confirmation as to whether persons with disabilities, including those with intellectual disabilities, were able to vote and whether assistance and accessible information on voting was provided to them. Data on the proportion of children with disabilities who received inclusive education in line with article 24 of the Convention would be helpful.

25. **Mr. Parra Dussan** asked whether the State party had established international cooperation with other Islamic countries. He invited the delegation to clarify who was responsible for coordinating implementation of the Convention and harmonizing public policies concerning persons with disabilities.

26. **Mr. Chaker** said that, while the measures taken to facilitate the use of Braille were most commendable, it was also important to ensure that computers and websites were accessible for blind persons.

27. **Mr. Basharu** said that it would be useful to learn about measures to improve the provision of information to persons with disabilities, especially via electronic media. Details about the physical accessibility of health facilities for persons with disabilities, especially women and girls with disabilities and persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, and about the availability of accessible information for those seeking health services would also be appreciated. He wished to know what steps had been taken to provide reasonable accommodation in the workplace. He would also be interested to hear what was being done to ensure the accessibility of voting procedures and whether sign language interpretation was provided at polling stations. With reference to paragraph 176 of the State party report (CRPD/C/IRN/1), he invited the delegation to clarify the use of the term "mutilated people", which appeared not to be in line with the Convention.

28. **Mr. Kim** Hyung Shik said that he would welcome the delegation's comments on concerns that rehabilitation services were based primarily on physical medicine, at the expense of vocational reorientation, for example. He would also be grateful for clarification as to whether the State party's community-based rehabilitation programmes covered all key components of the World Health Organization community-based rehabilitation matrix. In the light of reports that over 60 per cent of persons with disabilities were unemployed, he wished to know what proportion of public and private sector positions were occupied by persons with disabilities and whether the sustainable jobs that had been created were equivalent to employment in the open labour market or traditional sheltered employment. Lastly, more details about the standard of living of unemployed persons with disabilities and efforts to prevent such persons from falling into chronic poverty would be appreciated.

29. **Mr. Pyaneandee** said that the Committee would like to have more information on the adoption system, notably the rules governing the adoption of children with disabilities and adoptions by adults with disabilities, which appeared to be at variance with the Convention. Secondly, he wished to know whether there were sanctions for denial of reasonable accommodation in the workplace and, if so, who enforced them.

30. **Mr. Buntan**, noting that there was no reference to disability-based discrimination in the Iranian Constitution or any legislation, said that he would appreciate information on plans to explicitly prohibit such discrimination, including denial of reasonable accommodation. He would also like to know more about the situation of refugees with disabilities who were not covered by the initiatives mentioned in the State party report and the replies to the list of issues; in particular, he wished to have details about cases of violations of their rights and measures taken to protect those rights.

31. It would be interesting to learn about the availability of easy-to-read or plain-language information and communication, especially in public facilities and official interactions. He wished to point out that the provision of special schools did not constitute an inclusive policy. In that connection, the delegation should elaborate on any plans the State party had to develop an inclusive education system and indicate what the role of special schools would be under such a system. Information on the availability of accessible communication on sexual and reproductive health services for persons with disabilities would also be appreciated. While the introduction of a monthly living allowance for persons with disabilities was welcome, he would like to have details about the amount provided to recipients, the eligibility criteria and the value of the allowance compared to the minimum wage.

32. He wished to know how the State party intended to remove the barriers preventing persons with disabilities from participating in political life, including the bar on their election to political office, and whether legislative changes would be made to enable persons under guardianship to exercise their political rights.

33. It would be useful to hear whether the State party intended to ratify and implement the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled. Lastly, the delegation should indicate whether there were plans to establish or designate an independent monitoring mechanism with a clearly defined role, in accordance with article 33 (2) and (3) of the Convention.

34. **The Chair**, noting that her question regarding the decriminalization of homosexuality had not yet been answered, said that she also wished to know what health services were provided for lesbian and gay persons with psychosocial disabilities caused by minority stress. She invited the delegation to comment on reports that such persons continued to be subjected to harmful conversion therapies and on the statement, made by the head of the High Council for Human Rights, that homosexuality was an illness requiring treatment. She noted in that regard that homosexuality was not included in the International Classification of Diseases and that conversion therapies had been condemned by the Special Rapporteur on torture.

35. **Mr. Buntan** said that he would like to know whether measures had been taken to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons with disabilities who lost the support of their families and social benefits provided by public or private organizations following the disclosure of their sexual orientation. Lastly, he asked what support was available to landmine victims living with disabilities who were under the age of 18.

The meeting was suspended at 11.40 a.m. and resumed at 12.20 p.m.

36. **Mr. Nazizi Asl** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his country had signed the Marrakesh Treaty and planned to initiate the ratification process.

37. **Mr. Jafarzadeh** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, under the law establishing the State Welfare Organization, persons with disabilities must account for between 2 and 5 per cent of staff of all government organizations and NGOs, any failure to comply with that quota was investigated and, in the case of NGOs, punishable by a fine that was payable to the State Welfare Organization and served to finance the creation of jobs for persons with disabilities. Other relevant State obligations, detailed in paragraph 149 of his country's report, included the provision of technical and vocational training to persons with disabilities through the Technical and Vocational Training Organization. Article 119 of the Labour Code stipulated that employment services should be made available for persons with disabilities and obliged the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare to ensure that workplaces provided any welfare facilities required by employees with disabilities. The claim that 60 per cent of persons with disabilities were unemployed was inaccurate; in any case, all unemployed persons with disabilities received a monthly unemployment allowance from the State.

38. **Mr. Moeini** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the State Welfare Organization and the Foundation of Martyr and Veterans' Affairs helped to monitor the implementation of the Convention by compiling data from various government bodies, which had been used to produce his country's report. Networks of NGOs, which had provided information for the

shadow report, played a role in monitoring both the implementation of the Convention and the work of the State Welfare Organization and the Foundation of Martyr and Veterans' Affairs. Monitoring was also conducted by bodies such as the Coordinating Council of Persons with Disabilities and the parliament. The State party was working to improve coordination between the various monitoring mechanisms.

39. **Mr. Nakvinejad** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that sign language interpreting was provided for a range of television programmes, including those shown during prime time. In 2015, sign language interpreting had been provided for some 1,150 hours of radio and television broadcasting, including 342 hours of programmes aimed specifically at persons with disabilities. There were plans to increase the quantity and quality of programmes for persons with disabilities. Nearly 50 per cent of Iranian NGOs working to protect the rights of persons with disabilities had official websites, where they raised awareness of related issues and advertised events for persons with disabilities. Further efforts would be made to increase the accessibility of such websites. While sign language interpreting was also available in cinemas, the cinema industry was resisting other attempts to improve accessibility for fear of losing customers.

40. The State Welfare Organization had launched a project to promote the accessibility of cultural and historical sites; the initiative was led by five NGOs, which organized national and international tours for persons with disabilities and exchanged experiences with organizations abroad. Moreover, the State party was negotiating cooperation agreements with countries such as Greece and Turkey to improve the accessibility of monuments.

41. Vulnerable groups, such as women and children with disabilities, could seek refuge from violence in shelters provided by the State Welfare Organization. There had been a rise in the number of complaints of violence against persons with disabilities and the number of crisis interventions carried out.

42. Efforts were under way to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals, including the eradication of poverty among persons with disabilities, into national planning. Around 26,000 residential units were being constructed as part of a government plan to provide free housing for persons with disabilities, especially families including two or more persons with disabilities. In-home services included visits by trained doctors and counsellors and informal care provided by volunteers.

43. He wished to clarify that the 3 per cent quota for employment of persons with disabilities to which Mr. Kabue had referred applied to government organizations only; it had not been very successful, owing to the requirement that those employed must possess the necessary qualifications. Other measures to promote the employment of persons with disabilities included financing local markets organized by persons with disabilities. The State party had signed a memorandum of understanding with the Russian Federation on initiatives to exhibit handicrafts produced by persons with disabilities. In 2016, 25,000 sustainable job opportunities for persons with disabilities had been created by the State Welfare Organization and 10,000 by the Foundation of Martyr and Veterans' Affairs.

44. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons with disabilities were not subjected to conversion therapy or any kind of forced treatment; all persons seeking rehabilitation services were treated equally, regardless of sexual orientation.

45. **Mr. Jafarzadeh** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that there was legislation to ensure that organizations fulfilled their obligations in terms of employment of persons with disabilities. A number of cases relating to employment had been brought before the courts by persons with disabilities and had been resolved. The general article on non-discrimination in the Constitution prohibited all types of discrimination, including on grounds of disability.

46. The only restriction on participation in political life concerned blind persons, who were prohibited from standing for election to the parliament; a bill to amend the relevant legislation would be submitted later in 2017. Persons with disabilities actually accounted for 25 per cent of the parliament; that was a major accomplishment, which served as an example to other countries. Persons with disabilities, including blind persons, could

participate in elections to other bodies, including city and rural councils; there were four persons with disabilities on Tehran City Council, for instance. There were no restrictions on the right to vote of persons with disabilities; polling stations were accessible to all, including wheelchair users, and voters could be accompanied by an assistant. Access was further facilitated by the provision of mobile polling stations, which accounted for between 10 and 15 per cent of all polling stations.

47. **Ms. Nemati** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that no distinction was made between Olympic and Paralympic medal winners in her country. Within the National Paralympic Committee, there was a specific committee to promote sport among target groups, including children with disabilities; around 1,024 children with disabilities had benefited from the committee's work thus far.

48. **Mr. Ghafourian** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the general policy was to promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream schools and to provide accessible educational materials and sign language interpreters in those schools, to ensure equal opportunities for all. Out of around 130,000 students with disabilities in the Islamic Republic of Iran, more than 73,000 were in special schools, of whom 45,000 were boys and 27,000 were girls. There were around 30,000 boys and 26,000 girls with disabilities in mainstream education. In cooperation with the Organization for the Development, Renovation and Equipping of Schools, a plan was being drawn up to improve the accessibility of educational establishments and would be implemented shortly.

49. **Mr. Naziri Asl** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, in spite of the challenges faced as a result of unjust sanctions, his country remained committed to the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, at the national and international levels.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.